

This week, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing on security failures in Libya that led to the assassination of United States Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans on the eleventh anniversary of the September 11 attacks. President Obama's Administration initially said the attack was incited by an inflammatory video, but the State Department recently acknowledged that it was actually a premeditated terrorist attack against the United States. In addition, reports surfaced that the State Department denied requests from Ambassador Stevens' security team for enhanced protection. The committee investigated why the Administration repeatedly denied these requests and examined the Administration's inaccurate assessment of the nature of the attack.

By way of background, according to State Department reports and news accounts, on the evening of September 11, the Benghazi consulate was invaded by a group of armed men. Ambassador Stevens, Sean Smith, and one of the security officers sought shelter in the consulate's safe room, but the attackers dumped diesel fuel in the building and set it on fire. Suffocating from the choking black smoke, the Americans attempted to escape the building, but neither Stevens nor Smith was able to exit. Smith was found dead inside the safe room. Stevens somehow reached a Libyan hospital, where he died of his injuries. During the hours of heavy fighting that followed, agents Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods were also killed. I grieve for the death of these four Americans, and I honor their commitment to serve our nation and the ultimate sacrifice they made.

During the hearing, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Wood, former leader of a security team in Libya, stated that "diplomatic security remained weak" during his tenure there. Despite thirteen incidents leading up to the attack, including an explosion that created a gaping hole in the perimeter of the consulate, the Administration denied repeated requests from the mission in Libya for extra security. Two high-ranking State Department officials testified that the Libyan consulate received enough resources to meet the known threat. A memo to Committee Democrats, however, suggests that requests were rejected in order to keep the American presence in Libya "artificially low." Eric Nordstrom, a State Department officer who directed security resources in Libya, testified that "it was abundantly clear that we were not going to get resources until the aftermath of an incident."

The Committee also explored why, five days after the tragedy, United States Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice stated that the assault was "not premeditated," even though intelligence agencies had evidence within twenty-four hours to indicate that it was an organized attack. The Libyan government correctly identified this attack within a few days. In contrast, it took the White House nine days to acknowledge that it was "self-evident that what happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack." During the hearing, the Administration did not adequately

explain the reason for its delay in recognizing the attack, nor why Ambassador Rice and the White House spokesman told the American people that the violence was caused by protestors responding to an Internet video.

I am troubled that the Administration did not respond to warning signs before the attack and did not recognize the nature of the attack for more than a week. I am also concerned that it took the Federal Bureau of Investigation three weeks to arrive at the crime scene in Benghazi, even as U.S. reporters arrived within a matter of days. Please know that I will continue to support efforts to determine whether the Administration's inaccurate characterization of the Benghazi attack was the result of negligence or a deliberate attempt to mislead the American people. I will also continue to work with fellow members of Congress to ensure that every effort is made to protect Americans serving abroad, and that the terrorists who carried out this vicious attack are brought to justice.